XVII.

However, the few months just preceding the announcement of the very happy tidings of my release turned out the most tedious and the most gloomy that 1 can ever recall to memory. At the end of almost an age—long twelve years of penal servitude, I seamed to feel that I had spent whatever storage of life energy I had with me while entering the prison walls, even to the very last dregs, in order lo conquer fate, in this most highly contested battle of life. I found myself a total wreck, in every way, with the candle of life burning so low, that it could not hold out for very long against odds, unless succour came very soon from somewhere and in some form or other. Failing this chance-relief from some unexpected region, I knew that there lay eight more long years for me to do and as for that, my chances were indeed very small, not to say nil. Those eight years it. seemed had spread out their sable veil encompassing me from all directions in an ever-

thickenning shade; to catch through it
a glimpse
of the future was no easy job for one,
spent up
and stranded as I found myself there.
Unless